

Leadership for Mobilising Change in Educating Teachers for Further Education and Training

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Abstract

This chapter explores constraints and capacities in enacting leadership that seeks to mobilise change in educating teachers for Further Education and Training (FET), a complex and contested fields intersecting Technical and Vocational Education and Training. FET curriculum is located at the crossroads of competing expectations and priorities by multiple stakeholders, including government policy-makers, accreditation authorities, industry, students, teachers and teacher educators. Conceptualising, implementing and evaluating leadership and associated change that attend to and synthesise these stakeholders' perspectives is crucial to ensuring that FET teacher education is as effective, efficient, productive and potentially transformational as possible.

The chapter interrogates the authors' efforts to enact this kind of leadership for mobilising change in a single Australian university's FET programs. In particular, it draws on qualitative data from a "FET Forum" with a large number of local stakeholders and the reflections of a non-participant observer, clustered around the two foci of curriculum and educators. The data analysis is framed by six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership distilled by the authors from current leadership research. These six dimensions are accompanied by specific suggested principles for enacting this kind of leadership in contemporary FET teacher education. These findings support the proposition that sustainable and transformational leadership is worth the potential risks associated with pursuing such leadership as a vehicle for engaging and mobilising productive change in FET learning and teaching. Those risks in turn highlight the unstable forces and competing discourses of current university work for which this leadership approach proffers possible strategies rather than guaranteed panaceas.

Introduction

In this chapter we pursue four key points of an overarching argument, each point prosecuted in a separate section of the chapter:

- The contemporary world of Further Education and Training (FET) teacher education in Australia is complex, contested and characterised by competing discourses and priorities that complicate the work of FET teacher educators.
- The FET teacher educators who are co-authors of this chapter have elaborated a particular approach to effective leadership that stands them in good stead for mobilising change around such key questions as curriculum (re)design and engaging stakeholder perceptions.
- The "FET Forum" described below provides a detailed example of how selected dimensions of that leadership approach can be deployed to mobilise that kind of change in relation to curriculum evaluation.
- The dimensions of that leadership approach can likewise be harnessed to facilitate and implement productive change in university learning and teaching, both for FET and more broadly.

In pursuing these four points, we take up specific aspects of the challenge of change within the contested environment of higher education – for example, the competition experienced between on-campus face-to-face teacher education programs and off-campus distance teacher education programs, and that among the various stakeholders who act in sometimes separate and sometimes aligned ways to shape teacher education programs. We engage with particular aspects of learning and teaching as they are enacted within one individual site: the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ), specifically through the lens of the faculty's Further Education and Training (FET) pre-service teacher education programs. For purposes of clarification, the term "Further Education and Training (FET)" is used to describe those programs in the Faculty of Education at USQ that contribute to training Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) teachers for the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Secondary Education sector, as well as adult educators for industry and community education and training roles. FET stakeholders are diverse individuals and groups who have a direct interest in the makeup and deployment of these programs.

Our intent is to explore our enactment of leadership as a group of academics who occupy various responsibilities for these programs and who have a shared professional commitment to responding effectively to interests, concerns and contestations of the kind outlined above. In particular, we seek to make particular meaning from FET stakeholder feedback about the content and delivery of the programs. That enactment of leadership was manifested in how we negotiated the task of facilitating stakeholder feedback, how we conceptually wrestled with its meaning and how we translated and transformed this meaning into practice.

The data that we obtained were taken from our organisation of, and engagement with, the "FET Forum". The forum was a gathering in 2006 of 20 FET program stakeholders which included representatives from Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, Queensland secondary schools, the Australian Defence Force and current students and graduates of USQ's FET programs. The primary aim of this forum was to make explicit participant voices and to use these voices as a means to evaluate programmatic actualities and possibilities. This chapter explores a different but clearly resonant focus: our enactments of leadership in facilitating and harnessing the articulation of those voices and consequent changes in curriculum offerings. The forum provided us with an ideal site for such an exploration, given the current organisational focus on program rejuvenation at USQ and this book's emphasis on multiple forms of leadership for change in university learning and teaching.

Figure 1 depicts a conceptual framework developed by the authors in a previous publication (Danaher, Tyler & Arden, 2007), which proposes a theoretical model for interrogating curriculum through a trifocal lens of leadership, quality and technology. Firstly, leadership is seen as sustainable and as generating widespread ownership of change and lasting improvements to practice (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Secondly, quality interrogates dominant educational practice and leads to the transformation of practice (Rowan, 2003). Thirdly, technology is the creation of sociotechnical environments (Fischer & Sugimoto, n.d.) in which technology's status as being intertwined with society (Warschauer, 2002) is acknowledged above its more traditional functions of curriculum content or delivery tool. In this model these three

lenses are focused on the crucial aspects of meaning making and the resultant practice within an educational enterprise. The model provides a conceptual framework that can be adapted to generate an exploration of any or all of the three central educational elements – curriculum, educators and learners (the first two of which are the focus of this chapter) – in engagement with questions about leadership, quality and technology, that serves to illuminate how we, as educators and learners, interact with the curriculum and go about making meaning, performing practice and transforming futures.

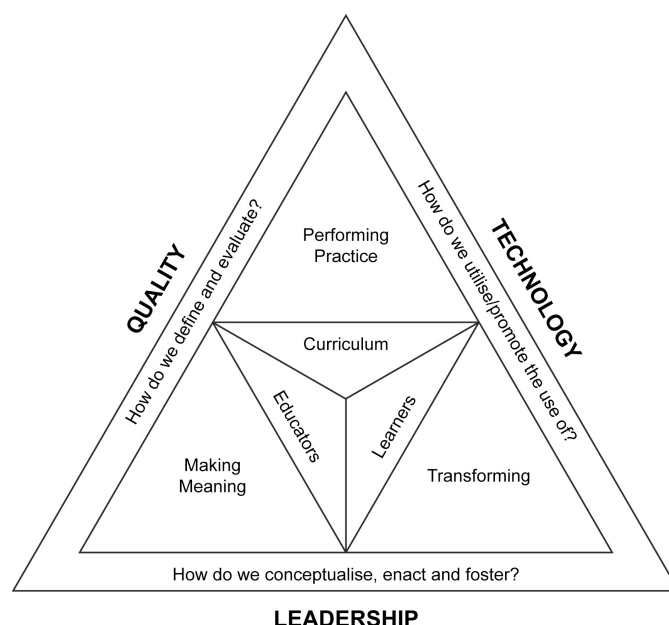


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Interrogating Curriculum Leadership, Quality and Technology in the USQ FET Programs (Danaher, Tyler & Arden, 2007, p. 81)

In this chapter we guide our inquiry by focusing on the leadership aspect within the model in relation to the intersection between curriculum and educators. This focus is consistent with the argument outlined above: curriculum is in urgent need of the leadership values and strategies of the teacher educators whose work is portrayed here. From this perspective, Figure 2 emphasises our focal points by emphasising the curriculum, educators, making meaning and transforming elements. Having drawn attention to these elements, we move now to offer a contextually grounded answer to the question, “How as educators do we enact leadership as we attempt to transform curriculum and co-construct new meaning to produce a momentum for quality change within the FET programs at USQ?”

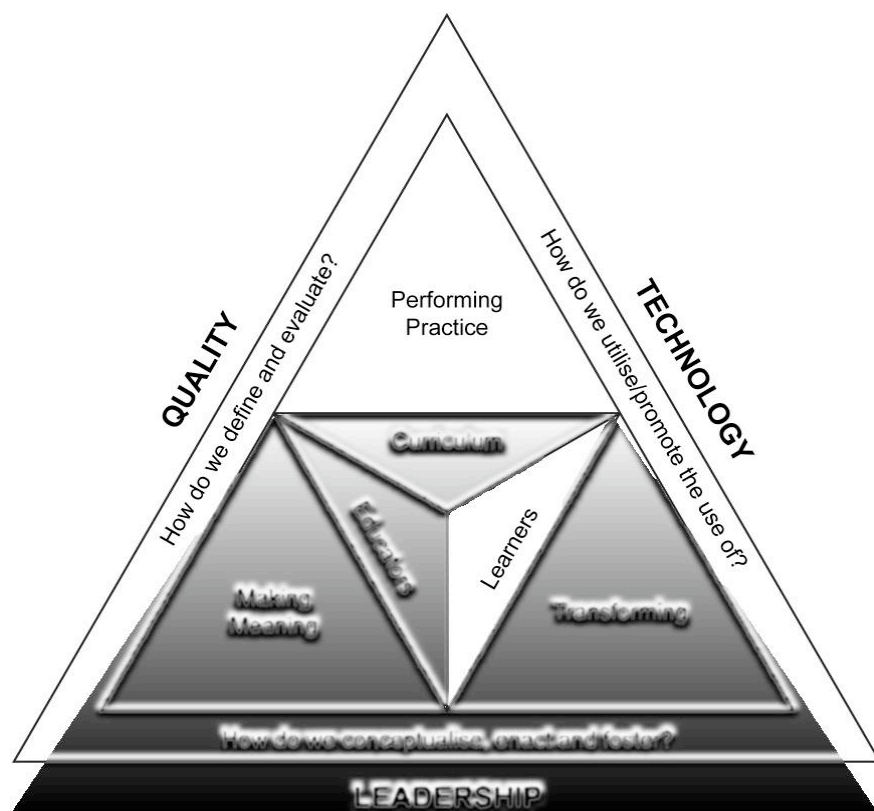


Figure 2: Conceptualising Leadership for Promoting Curriculum Innovation and Mobilising Change in FET Learning and Teaching (adapted from Danaher, Tyler & Arden, 2007, p. 81)

The argument presented in the chapter is that enacting a particular kind of leadership (highlighting sustainability and transformation) to mobilise effective and productive change at the site of the study requires brings together and integrates multiple perspectives on FET teacher education. This argument has been structured into five sections. Firstly, the context and issues framing the FET curriculum are articulated. Secondly, six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership are distilled from a review of current leadership research. Thirdly, the study's approach to gathering the stakeholders' perspectives is outlined. Fourthly, we articulate the relevant themes that emerged from the data, clustered around leadership enactment and change mobilisation. Fifthly, we elicit a set of specific principles for, and examples of, enacting sustainable and transformational leadership, both for FET teacher education and for university learning and teaching more broadly.

FET Curriculum: Context and Issues

In a previous paper, the authors noted the considerable burden placed on the FET curriculum by the combined weight of multiple – and often competing – stakeholder needs and expectations, resulting in the need for FET students and teachers to negotiate individual and collective pathways among different and sometimes contradictory discourses and understandings (Danaher, Tyler & Arden, 2007). This situation places consequent and additional pressure on FET programs to steer a course among three sets of potentially contradictory imperatives:

- To address the Queensland College of Teachers' (QCoT's) accreditation criteria for teacher registration (or their equivalents in other Australian states)

whilst simultaneously ensuring sufficient coverage of dominant topics within an increasingly complex and fluid Australian VET system

- To prepare senior secondary vocational educators who are able to ‘hit the ground running’ in the school environment whilst addressing the knowledge and skill requirements of TAFE teachers and trainers in industries as diverse as hospitality, horticulture and the defence forces, and
- To provide the degree of recognition and credit transfer for industry skills and VET qualifications required to retain market share in an increasingly competitive tertiary education sector whilst fulfilling the requirements of meeting standards and providing equity and support for students as well as ensuring that graduates have been challenged to question and critique dominant practices.

These are the challenges faced by FET curriculum developers and educators and therefore by the authors of this chapter. As we elaborate in this chapter, these ‘real world’ problems require particular kinds of leadership to be brought to bear on them, in order to mobilise specific principles for change in FET teacher education. The findings and discussion provide examples of data and principles that reflect possibilities for the enactment of sustainable and transformational leadership in this field.

More broadly, discussion of the competing demands of and on various stakeholders – and in particular educators and employers – revisits the longstanding debate about the role and purposes of education in our society, and the relative merits of general and vocational education which has been a feature of education in our contemporary world. More recently, the debate has shifted to incorporate a critique of the lifelong learning agenda, with universities said to be under heightened pressure “to attend to the needs of the marketplace” (Gouthro, 2002, p. 337), and VET structure, curriculum and delivery accused of being driven by unquestioned imperatives of skill development for increased productivity and economic growth at the expense of sustainability (Anderson, 2007). Notwithstanding this critique, it has been noted that concerns in the vocational education literature have shifted from the debate about the ‘what’ (what will be learned) to the ‘how’ – the “journey to vocational competence” (TAFE and Community Education Policy and Support Unit, 2004, p. 5). There have been calls for “an evidence-based approach to the practice of teaching”, based on practitioner studies of “what works for whom under what circumstances and with what effects” (thereby highlighting FET teacher professionalism), which should in turn inform the design and content of university curricula (TAFE and Community Education Policy and Support Unit, 2004, pp 24-25). Despite the potential limitations of such “evidence-based approach[es]” (Davies, 2003), this is consistent with Chappell (2003), who argues that vocational teacher education should not be tied to any particular educational theory but should adopt “...a more pragmatic position in which ‘constructive alignment’...or appropriateness to different purposes and settings...has become the key guiding principle” (p. 4). What are needed in this contentious and constantly shifting terrain are the dimensions of an approach to leadership that will mobilise change effectively to negotiate pathways through the terrain while also promoting educationally oriented strategies and values.

Towards Sustainable and Transformational Leadership

A review of the leadership research which we believe is directly applicable to our notions of appropriate leadership enactment centres on the concepts of sustainable and transformational leadership. But before we move to explicate these two notions we need to articulate our position on the leadership versus management debate (Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003). We concur with Re (2007) that, “While there has been an increase in the discussion and the rhetoric concerning leadership and management competencies, the jury is still out...” (p. 1). Notwithstanding, we do acknowledge leadership and management as important ingredients in the success of an enterprise (Kopp, 2005) but prefer to emphasise the voices of leadership that move away from notions of new managerialism (Gouthro, 2002) and towards those that focus “on improving the quality of teaching, learning and educational outcomes and promoting the best thinking about teaching and learning” (Woolf & Carpenter, 2006, p. 1). This is a conceptual space where education for democratic citizenship speaks to us at a greater volume than does the concept of education as a market (Gouthro, 2002), even though we concede the increasing reach of the latter. Indeed, our view of leadership includes its capacity to seize opportunities afforded by the marketisation of education to forge new alliances and associations that might contain the seeds of new and alternative educational futures.

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) tell us that “[s]ustainable leadership matters...[by] go[ing] beyond temporary gains in achievement...to creat[ing] lasting, meaningful improvements...” (p. 8). Based on their research, sustainable leadership lasts because it encourages others to enact leadership from the outset, by enabling those others to share the vision of the community/school through distributing leadership (a different process from delegation or shedding executive workloads). These leadership strategies not only groom new leaders but also act in authentic and socially just ways to promote the success of others and to encourage diversity of experience and thinking. These researchers’ final argument is that “[s]ustainable leadership is activist” (p. 11). This assumes an emancipatory position (in the sense of seeking to liberate education from capture and control by a neoliberal agenda) in which campaigning to improve the functioning of an enterprise is enacted persistently by all concerned. A crucial aspect of this position is acknowledging that such improvement is presumably the goal of all members of the educational enterprise, yet some of those members are operating from diametrically opposed viewpoints. On that basis, working to synthesise both the commonalities and the divergences evident within those viewpoints while respecting and valuing such diversity is a complex but important task.

Starting with an overview of sustainable leadership draws for us a picture in which the contemporary leadership research appears as a cross pollination of concepts and theories. For example, Spillane, Halverson and Drummond (2001) also talk about a distributed leadership perspective in relation to school principals and Oakes, Quartz and Lipton (2000) offer an example of activist leadership in an attempt to emancipate civic responsibility in schools. Arguably one of the most useful repositories of leadership comes from research into transformational leadership, particularly when it highlights authentic action (Price, 2003) and empowerment rather than dependence (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003). Our inclusion of this notion is based on its resonance with the concept of sustainable leadership, for transformational leaders are seen as “transformational agents [who] create and sustain an organisational culture that nurtures creative efforts and facilitates the diffusion of learning” (Callan, 2005, p. 10).

Avolio (2005) argues that there are (at a minimum) four interrelated sets of behaviours that are enacted by transformational leaders. These relate to:

- Inspiring others by communicating an attractive and vivid vision in relation to the organisation's stakeholders
- Creating opportunities for and encouraging creativity and innovation
- Providing a role model for staff, and
- Placing importance on considering the individual within an organisation.

It is from this perspective of sustainable and transformational leadership that we have synthesised a conceptual lens through which we can identify and interpret enactments of leadership in relation to the "FET Forum" conducted by USQ's FET team. Our lens seeks to illuminate an enactment of leadership that demonstrates the following six dimensions that we have distilled from the current research literature:

1. Encourages the enactment of leadership in others
2. Articulates a forward-looking, positive vision
3. Encourages and promotes innovation
4. Encourages cross fertilisation of ideas
5. Seeks, acknowledges and caters for individual contributions, and
6. Is activist in taking an emancipatory position.

Like any conceptual framework, this approach's utility depends on its applicability to specific research sites. The discussion below exemplifies each dimension with reference to USQ's FET programs, the site of the study being reported here.

From an exploration of the relevant leadership research we move to an explanation of the method that we employed to interrogate those aspects of the FET programs that emerged from the preceding discussion of context and issues – for example, the means through which we sought and gave life to stakeholder needs and expectations in our attempts to reinvigorate the FET curriculum. In the discussion section we then analyse the data collected in the light of what was revealed above from the selected research on leadership.

Gathering the Stakeholders' Perspectives

Local FET stakeholders were invited to participate in the aforementioned "FET Forum". Table 1 provides a breakdown of the numbers of stakeholder representatives who participated in the forum. In the interests of quality assurance and strategic planning, as well as an enactment of curriculum leadership and change mobilisation, the authors sought these stakeholders' perceptions of and suggestions for the delivery and outcomes of the FET programs at USQ.

Stakeholder representative groups	Number
Graduated FET students (present at forum)	4
Enrolled FET students	1
Technical and Further Education (TAFE)	4
Secondary schools	4
Australian Defence Force	2
University academics	4

Observer researcher	1
TOTAL	20

Table 1: FET Stakeholder Representatives

The forum sought responses to the following questions:

In what way are current FET programs meeting stakeholder needs?

What are the evolving secondary and post-secondary market needs? and

In what way can the faculty be more flexible in order to meet the emerging and evolving stakeholder/market needs?

Appropriate clearance was obtained from the university human ethics panel, with participants being provided with information sheets and signing the correspondence consent forms.

The forum took the form of an introductory session over lunch, three separate and concurrent one hour focus groups and a final half hour plenary session. During the introductory session moderators explained the rationale and format of the forum and outlined the FET curriculum. Each of the three focus groups addressed the same questions and issues, and the plenary session summarised each group's discussions and ended with a further period of reflection among all participants.

The use of focus groups proved to be an effective approach for providing useful stakeholder feedback whilst maximising what Stokes and Bergin (2006, p. 26) described as “extrinsic advantages such as speed and cost”. Mindful of the possibility of “moderator bias”, and because it was not practical in this instance to involve “a series of complementary moderators” in each group, a non-participant observer was involved to assure the credibility and trustworthiness of the data (Prince & Davies, 2001, p. 207). On reflection, the method was effective in eliciting data relevant to the authors' enactment of leadership and mobilisation of change in relation to the FET programs and the associated curriculum.

Emergent Themes for Leadership Enactment and Change Mobilisation

The chapter draws on three sources of data in its exploration of the enactment of leadership to mobilise change in FET learning and teaching at USQ:

- Participant feedback during the “FET Forum”
- The systematic observations of a non-participant observer, and
- The forum facilitators' reflections on their leadership actions in the light of that feedback and those results.

This section synthesises those findings from the first two data sources (see also White & Tyler, 2006) organised according to the previously highlighted two elements of the model identified in Figure 1 and magnified in Figure 2: curriculum and educators. The next section interrogates these emergent themes on the basis of the third data source: the forum facilitators' analysis of their enactment of the previously identified six crucial dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership.

Data about the element of “Curriculum” indicated that in many respects the most contested – and hence most in need of the enactment of leadership – was this very theme. There were two principal sources of this contentiousness: government legislation and policy-making; and stakeholder expectations.

Government legislation and policy exhibited power through such agencies as QCoT, which is responsible for accrediting teacher education programs in Queensland, and such mechanisms as QCoT's five Professional Standards that graduating pre-service teachers are required to demonstrate. While the need for such certification across universities was generally accepted, and while the articulation of standards was mostly linked with enhancing the professional status of teaching, some individuals and groups felt that the effect (if not the intent) of QCoT was to privilege the voice of the senior secondary teaching component of the FET curriculum over that of future teachers in TAFE institutes and other private providers of Vocational and Technical Education. By contrast, the influence of the Australian VET system, through such processes as national industry-based curriculum, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks, was resented by some stakeholders whose focus was school-based VET.

This contentiousness of the FET curriculum was evident also in the multiple and sometimes competing stakeholder expectations revealed in the findings. For example, while some forum participants acknowledged the curriculum's effectiveness in straddling the two systems of school and TAFE, this overlap was seen by other participants as a disjuncture, with one vocal TAFE representative asserting that the training packages used by TAFE and other private providers are not curricula and that both university staff members and pre-service teachers needed to enhance their understanding of such packages.

Indeed, while there was a recognition that the FET curriculum helps to facilitate a partnership between schools and industry, there was also some disquiet that responding to the current skills shortage ("Gov[ernment] focus – skills shortage") might inadvertently devalue the social justice and other more 'liberal' imperatives of the FET programs.

A different set of expectations attached to what were identified as the "changing needs of clients (younger generations)", and hence to the perceived need to "Have our programs tailored more to the needs of the learner in terms of where they're coming from (knowledge, skills, experience, gaps etc.) + where they want to go". While this aspiration for learner-centred programs was commendable, the diversity of the sectors represented by the various stakeholders who participated in the forum highlighted the complexity of giving it full effect (see also Danaher, Danaher & Moriarty, 2007). For example, there was reference to the "Discourse" associated with such sites as "TAFE + workplace + school setting", as well as to the importance of developing "Workplace literacy". Our argument is that enacting leadership in the FET teacher education domain entails recognising, analysing and engaging in multiple fora with these kinds of complexities and potential contradictions.

The emergent theme from the "Educators" element had a less overt focus. It was directed in the three sources of data gathering at the different groups of educators with a stake in the FET programs. It was nevertheless clear that there were both commonalities and differences among those groups in relation to the programs. These commonalities and differences in turn helped to frame how the FET staff members approached the task of leadership enactment and change mobilisation by synthesising the commonalities while valuing and building on the differences.

The commonalities centred on a strong sense on the part of school teachers, teachers in TAFE Institutes and other private providers and the FET staff members that FET continues to be less valued than that component of senior secondary schooling directed at helping students to achieve university access. Thus, in addition to the references to lack of time, competing and relentless pressures and in some cases stress and burnout associated with the work intensification of contemporary educators, concerns were expressed about a perceived lack of recognition and valuing on the part of school, university and government decision-makers. This meant that FET stakeholders were more likely to position themselves as having to struggle for scarce resources inequitably distributed and as needing constantly to advocate for FET as a valid, valuable and viable educational sector.

The differences focused on a perceived lack of understanding on the part of other FET stakeholder groups of a particular group's specific requirements and contexts. This was most striking in conversations between secondary school and TAFE teachers, with each group responding to separate government department legislation and policies and hence to differences in such processes as student assessment. This was exemplified by a set of comments clustered around "Secondary vs. TAFE teaching – there is a difference", "Re-educating school teachers for TAFE teaching" and "Sectors have special requirements, e.g. curriculum". While the forum provided an excellent opportunity for participants from particular groups to listen to and learn from members of other groups, at least some of the discussion reflected a desire to communicate participants' own imperatives that they felt were not acknowledged by other groups. All of this set the scene for the authors' ongoing reflections about the current state of play and potential alternatives with a view to enacting leadership to mobilise change in FET teacher education and beyond that in university learning and teaching.

Interrogating the "FET Forum" for Leadership Enactment and Change Mobilisation

Earlier in the chapter we distilled six dimensions that we posited are crucial ingredients of the enactment of sustainable and transformational leadership, whether in terms of mobilising change in university learning and teaching or in other spheres of endeavour. Our task in this section is to use these six dimensions as an interrogatory lens for analysing our reflections on the findings reported above and on our leadership actions in relation to such initiatives as the "FET Forum" as both a process and a set of outcomes. In doing so, we elicit a number of principles and we identify specific corresponding strategies that we argue can provide a foundation for the enactment of such leadership in mobilising change in the FET programs at USQ. From this perspective, we see that enactment as having important implications for the conceptualisation and implementation of pre-service VET teacher education programs, centred on VET's fluid and shifting status in the Australian educational landscape. More broadly, we contend that such a status encapsulates much about the pressures and possibilities in conceptualising and exercising leadership in and for changing contemporary university learning and teaching.

Encourages the enactment of leadership in others

For leadership to be sustainable and transformational it needs to be authentic, and authentic leadership perpetuates itself in and through others. Authentic leadership inherently involves learning from experience, and in that light it is therefore capable

of being passed on to others. When leaders learn from their experiences, apply those lessons in practice and communicate that learning and application, they become role models to others. As the nature of leadership is communicated to and nurtured in others, they in turn are encouraged to learn from and act in the light of the observed example.

The grooming of new leaders who learn from their and others' experiences promotes diversity of leadership style and talent. As new and developing leaders find their individual leadership styles and identities, they enact those styles and identities in the leadership decisions and actions that they take. This was certainly the case with the "FET Forum", where participants representing different organisations and stakeholder groups could be considered potential and actual leaders – and were certainly regarded that way by the forum organisers – on the basis of their separate and shared interests in and contributions to maximising the quality, utility and impact of pre-service VET teacher education. Thus the forum organisers felt that it was crucial for multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives to be identified, encouraged and valued. At a practical level, this was important for ensuring cross sectoral acceptance and ownership of the programs being discussed. At a deeper and philosophical level, this was a vital element of encouraging the enactment of leadership in others.

Articulates a forward-looking, positive vision

The effect of that enactment of leadership in others is the perpetuation or succession of leadership in the short- and longer term. It also develops a forward-looking perspective on leadership. Dealing with the present can arguably be described as management, whereas preparing to deal with the future can correspondingly be regarded as the role of leadership. It requires looking forward to prepare today for what will be needed tomorrow. A vision of tomorrow is therefore necessary, and it must be supported by a positive belief or expectation that what is envisioned today is achievable and appropriate for tomorrow.

New and developing leaders are groomed for the present and the future, looking beyond temporary or short-term considerations so that the needs of both the present and the future are met. Effective leadership requires the articulation of this perspective so that there is a shared vision and understanding among existing and new leaders. A recurring theme in the "FET Forum" discussion was the complex challenges confronting individual organisations as well as the postcompulsory sector as a whole, signified in part by constant changes in official policies and priorities. Yet those challenges and changes also underscored the necessity of the articulation and sharing of a forward-looking and positive vision that would ensure some kind of continuity and maximise practical outcomes against the backdrop of a state of flux that could otherwise become paralysing and stultifying. The articulation and sharing of the beginnings of such a vision were specific examples of the enactment of leadership before, during and after the forum.

Encourages and promotes innovation

We can see that our attempts to innovate the USQ FET program curriculum – in the sense of adapting to meet constantly changing needs while also fulfilling our vision of education (like leadership) as being sustainable and transformational – have been helped as well as hindered by perceived problems and associated critical incidents derived from stakeholders' competing expectations and experiences of the program.

The “FET Forum” and the associated ongoing planning and development by the authors and their program colleagues constitute efforts to enact sustainable and transformational leadership directly focused on the encouragement and promotion of program innovation.

At the same time, we recognise the complexity of those efforts. The forum was an initiative in fostering collaboration and shared understanding and ownership, and it was successful in helping to generate productive relationships that continue to this day. On the other hand, the authors accept that the primary responsibility for leadership in innovating the USQ FET program curriculum rests with the USQ staff members, and that those programs are part of a much larger set of intersecting and overlapping networks.

Encourages the cross fertilisation of ideas

The “FET Forum” was conceived in part out of a recognition that the USQ staff members’ ideas and perceptions could only be strengthened by encouraging cross fertilisation with other stakeholders’ understandings. By contrast, the forum demonstrated that such cross fertilisation is neither easy nor automatic, because stakeholders’ ideas tend to differ – sometimes widely and contradictorily – within as well as across stakeholder groups. For example, while the forum small group exercise was useful in eliciting the range of stakeholders’ views, it also highlighted that some stakeholders are more readily disposed than others to listen to and engage with the competing views of other participants.

This is an important task for sustainable and transformational leadership – the ability to look beyond one’s own worldview, with its attendant psychological impulses of ego and security, to appreciate – even revel in – the ambiguity and complexity of most educational issues and to seek to find tentative and provisional ways of promoting shared understandings while respecting the right to hold alternative views.

Seeks, acknowledges and caters for individual contributions

Clearly, the results of these data are indicative of enactments of leadership in which voices are acknowledged, actively listened to and emphasised as valuable in relation to the FET enterprise. The act of disclosing such diverse and sometimes divergent perceptions and the ideas that this evoked are testament to the degree of security experienced by stakeholders with regard to publicly (and privately) articulating what they thought. It would be fair to argue that these contributions were enhanced and fostered by the authors’ enactments of open-mindedness and intellectual responsibility.

Further to this point of the acknowledgment of individual contributions is our claim of enabling enactments of principled pragmatism. Moore, Edwards, Halpin and George (2002) suggest that educators who self present as “decision-making individuals with a clear professional plan and purpose” (p. 554) act with effectiveness, regardless of the constraints that the external environment places upon them. These are educators whose identifications align with principled pragmatism. Even though it could be claimed that the data gathering methods above offered some constraint with regard to the hearing of the subtleties in all voices, stakeholders did provide pragmatic contributions that were effective in helping to secure QCoT second phase

accreditation – for example, the clear enunciation of the stakeholders’ desire for the inclusion of diversity content in the curriculum.

Is activist in taking an emancipatory position

Our research has been unashamedly activist in orientation, especially in our attempts to emancipate the position of FET within USQ and the educational community at large. It has been a project through which the voices of participating stakeholders have been synthesised into an amalgam. This amalgam has promoted curriculum reform in terms of sustainability, and further claims to transform the higher education FET experience into one in which improvements in the satisfaction levels of all stakeholders are evident. Our activism has been professional in the sense that it has reinstated trust (Groundwater-Smith & Sachs, 2002) in the voices of those who are affiliated with the FET enterprise and it has deployed those voices in an effort to gain purchase within the rationalist environment of program accreditation (Arden, Danaher & Tyler, 2005).

At the same time, we understand the potential obstacles and threats to leadership conceived as activism directed at emancipation. For example, we accept that educational institutions and practices are composed of multiple and often competing interests and positions, including our own. From this perspective, the goals of activism and the intended outcomes of emancipation are contextually specific and situated, rather than being unanimously identified and agreed. Nevertheless we argue that leadership that is not conceptualised at least partly in terms of improving the lived experiences and the life chances of learners and educators is misguided and unlikely to achieve its full potential. This applies equally to enacting leadership and mobilising change in the VET teacher education sector and in the university field of which it forms a part.

Conclusion

What insights does this chapter afford our developing understanding of the role of teacher educators’ enactment of leadership in mobilising change in FET in Australian university? At one level the chapter can be read as reporting an exercise in program evaluation and the authors’ efforts to establish clear and explicit links between the data presented at the “FET Forum” and strategies to enhance the FET teacher education program’s effectiveness. At a different level the forum data and the forum facilitators’ association of those data with the six dimensions of sustainable and transformational leadership distilled from the literature and presented as the chapter’s conceptual framework are intended to constitute evidence of the necessity and viability of a particular kind of leadership in changing university learning and teaching.

What clearly emerges from the preceding discussion is the need, if such leadership is to be enacted and such change is to be mobilised for the greater benefit of multiple participants and stakeholders, to strike a balance among several competing and potentially contradictory priorities. These priorities include: adhering to curriculum ‘imperatives’ issued by accreditation authorities; addressing the diverse needs and expectations of students and employers; recognising that these needs and expectations are likely to be borne of pragmatic, instrumental and perhaps even utilitarian motivations that are nonetheless valid; and recognising the responsibility that education and educators have to foster, enact and promote a particular kind of

leadership that challenges, questions and critiques. Getting this balance right is clearly crucial in order to ensure that the mobilisation of change is about improvements that are achieved, not at the expense of less powerful voices, but by highlighting and attending to them in a conscious and systematic manner. What is not as clear is exactly who these less powerful voices are; who is in fact marginalised in the curriculum process?

The reporting of the above enactments of leadership was clearly focused upon the curriculum and educator aspects of our conceptual framework (an exploration of the perspectives of learners having been held over for a separate publication). Given that situation, and despite the forum's and the chapter's emphasis on garnering multiple perspectives and promoting leadership in others, it is appropriate to acknowledge that our future challenge for leading the mobilisation of change is to ask whose voices it is that aren't being heard; to seek out contributions from those who haven't contributed and to show leadership by emphasising these voices over those that are stronger and more powerful. This act of curriculum leadership can be represented in the model represented in Figure 1 by firstly bringing attention to the learner and secondly by turning the (centred) three-dimensional pyramid on its head so that the base – which represents other and less privileged voices – is exposed, and must be interrogated. Viewed from this perspective, and on the basis of the findings presented in the chapter, sustainable and transformational leadership should certainly be given an opportunity for functioning as a potential vehicle for engaging and mobilising productive change in FET learning and teaching.

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